
Fairfield Farmhouse Community Trust

The Fairfield Farmhouse is the building that sits within the LEGUP community garden in Elder park. The trust was set up to renovate

the building and bring it into community use. The project is being developed within and as part of the common good of the city. The vision for the use of the building is being created through developing an education policy that will encourage community members participation in every aspect of the process.



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In the age of austerity there is no better time to take note of what we have

1. Common Good



Scotland has a rich history of education and educators. Scotland's University system help to make it one of the major contributors to the Enlightenment in the 18th century, producing major figures such as David Hume and Adam Smith. We also have a oral tradition of story telling and a cultural heritage that spans the reaches of the open countryside of the highlands to the urban workers cities that once catered to heavy industries, engineering and textiles, as well as a multitude of traditional arts and crafts and contemporary art.

There are endless examples of inspirational people both historically and in the here and now, educators, teachers, some well known and the vast majority we have never even heard of.

What runs through all of these things is the common good fund, a 500 year old tradition of collectivism and common ownership of which our garden and farmhouse is part of. This is unique to Scotland, and is something that sets us apart. It is a uniqueness we should be using. A civic tool we could be working with to involve local people in forming the questions of what is meant by our space and place. We need to be asking why we are not working with all of this originality in doing something different. For instance, how do we expand the thinking of a common good to replace jobs with the work that is needing done and to thinking about what education means for the 21st century in doing this.

2. Beginnings

The Farmhouse sits within the LEGUP community garden which was the site of the parks maintenance department. Before the garden project moved in the site and building lay derelict for around 20 years. The building is believed to be one of if not the oldest in Govan. A £2.5 M. project to build a Healthy Living Community complex of buildings on the site was stopped by community pressure as inappropriate as it was to big, to commercial, threatened the common good status of the site and folk also felt this money could have been put to better used in other parts of the community which badly needed it.

3. Inauguration

Farmhouse Trust was set up January 2011 - Inaugural meeting of the Fairfield Farmhouse Community Trust was held in the Pearce Institute. Around 80 or so community members attended, 55 people joined the trust and 14 people were elected to the management committee. The trust's draft constitution was reviewed and agreed. First committee meeting was held at the end of the same month.

The basis of the trust was that it was rooted in the common good and that the integrity of the site and that of the park was maintained as an open space for all to enjoy free from television and consumerism with a high emphasis on DIY or DIT [Do it together]

4. Ethos

The core team involved in this project where at pains that the work carried out on the building would incorporate at all stages an educational and self build ethos. That we would use the project to train local people in the various skills of woodwork, brickwork, stone masonry, roofing and in a vision for what the building would be used for.

5. First Phase

The first phase of this work was to make good the roofing to stem the rain that had been seeping into the building over its 20 years neglect. This work would help to dry out the building timbers, in order to assess what would need replaced and an idea of the work needing done.

A dedicated group set about this task and in 6 months had sealed off most of the roof from rain and had made one of the pavilions that sit at both sides of the main building watertight and fit for serving as a bothy in the bad weather.

Shortly after this work was completed the pavilion was set on fire destroying the roof and setting the project back further than when it was first started.

6. After some Reflection

After this event it was thought, a different approach was called for. The building to the average arsonist is always going to look like a good target and we can't keep performing to steps forward then three back. What we hadn't thought of as much, being involved mostly on the physical aspect of the building was what we were going to use it for.

So the thinking became. How maybe to secure the building with the appropriate fencing or such like in effect sealing it off completely and to concentrate on use of the building.

We then start to work on creating a vision for the space. What do we want our building to be? The first consideration was: We do not want to repeat what we already have, we want a unique institution or facility tailored to community needs and following the same process of community involvement, education, learning, throughout the process. A place that could also compliment and support other community institutions

7. Resource Centre

So we are looking to build a vision for an educational institution, a resource centre, a place for the kind of education that you do not get at school. Our garden already shows us the type of approach we will follow in the building of this idea. The garden already functions as a place of learning. As well as gardening our space offers a whole diverse range of connections and skills that can be transferred and adapted to many aspects of our day-to-day lives and creativity.

Note:

Patrick Geddes, the famous Edinburgh town planner knew how important the garden is in nurturing skills. Geddes understood the educational and connective values of the garden, which is why he was less concerned with the formal education of his children, but more interested in that they should become good gardeners. There is good grounding for this.

8. Sustenance Awareness

Re: The ability to find sustenance, awareness of the different elements that come together that create growth, judgement on these experiences, the weather, the geography, as well as the independence from the expensive processed poison of the supermarket. Also respite from the mental poison of television, fresh air that induces the sleep that allows us to awaken bright, and think better, which helps to broaden our intellectual powers. We can not think when we are falling asleep in drudgery or unemployment. These are the things our members reflect on in their experience of our garden and which gives the project direction.

9. Science

The sciences also come alive to people in the garden, biology, physics, mathematics, the environment and the processes of mother nature and the conversations that open up new areas of thought are to be had, as well as quiet reflective meditation.

So the garden also gives us a template for our centre, to be one of horizontal education where the tutor and student is interchangeable.

10. Nurture Responsibility A community based education centre would nurture creative, critical thinkers who contribute to the well-being of their communities. We would encourage young people to be part of the community with real responsibilities in building community infrastructure, rather than burning it down. So much of education is based on the future, young folk should also be educated for the here and now and involved in what is happening now.

Part of this process of finding out what we care about is making the invisible visible.

11. Built environment

There is so much that is valuable in building community confidence such as its history, where it has been, what it has done and the people and events that shape its identity. Much of this is invisible to many people. We would attempt to make this history both visible and available as an inspiration for thinking ahead.

12. History



Our built environment consists of layers of historical detail of where we have been, just like any other kind of history. Disrespecting our buildings is a disrespect for history and to the people who were part of that history. Our education remit should include the teaching of architecture as a civic value as well as an professional one, as we spend most of our lives inside buildings and lack the knowledge that could help us assess the economic value of the built environment we live in and constantly through our tax pay for. In the built environment we can find many analogies useful in thinking about these things.

13. Aesthetics Design

The practicalities and aesthetics of good design skills are as adaptable in our day to day life as the permaculture we perform in our garden, because these things rely on common sense knowledge and common sense knowledge is found at the root of the idea, the project, the development, the facility, at the locality of where it is happening, not in the surveyors office the spreadsheet of the accountant, nor the architects master plan. The community themselves need to become the planners and architects of our future and our environment.

14. Day to Day

Global Warming is irrelevant to a lot of people and anti war groups, feminist groups, they can often feel are intimidating. Unless these things can be made more understandable and part of peoples day to day education, life, experience, why should these attitudes change? Part of the farmhouse project would be in helping to put these things within the process of the day to day and help to make them more relevant and understandable in peoples lives.

15. Education

Education is the responsibility of all citizens not just professional teachers. The formal education system we practice to-day separates pupils by age, gender, religion, class, competition, isolation, hierarchy and specialisation, Categorisations that are in contrast to ideas that will challenge the local and global, environmental and economic crisis we are facing at present.

16. Here and Now

If we are not to engage our children in the problems of the here and now, how are we to fulfil the promises we make to them for the future if they do well at school, college, university? We still use the same carrot and stick education system that was invented for the industrial revolution. There was a time when we had an empire, the wheels of industry where at full speed and there was a chance we could all get a job. Not any more, these days are gone. How do we use the technology that has destroyed so much employment to facilitate creative employment that can be independent and place based in the community are questions our new community institutions should be asking.

17. Participation

John Dewey the educationist argued against schooling only as a preparation for life in the future. During their school years, he insisted, children need to be constructive participants in the social life of the community.

How do we provide the opportunities for young people to take ownership of problems or issues effecting their, environment, neighbourhood, school, community assets and institutions? Thereby giving meaning to their lives in the present and helping them to become better citizens.

18. Inter Generational Thinking

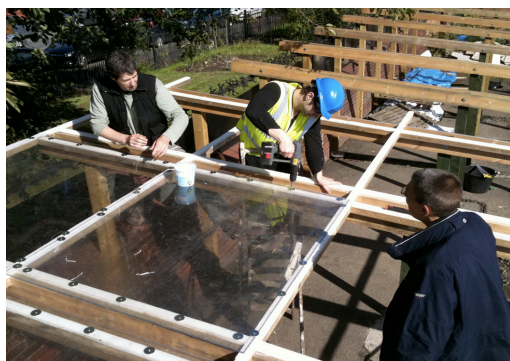
We see education as not just the domain of the youngsters, the oldsters in our communities have much of the knowledge and experience that is invisible to the young. Unearthing and sharing this knowledge can only be done in an non hierarchical educational environment where we all offer and share unique skills, no matter of age, colour, class or ethnicity.

Many of the above values and aspirations can be achieved by building an institution from the ground up. The quickest way to learn things is by doing things. It is not about what we learn but how we learn [Dewey]. To-days education should be slanted towards, not just being a cog in the machine of ever expanding growth, but how we develop ideas to sustain our environment from the blight that the ravages of industrial expansion has placed on it.

What better example that an alternative to the education of industrial expansion should grow from the epicentre of an industrial past such as Govan's.

The Fairfield Farmhouse Community Trust is working towards forming a template of empowerment through recognising Scotland's common good fund. A collection of buildings, land and movable assets that are publicly owned.

In a climate of austerity, precarious living, cuts and job loss, the common good can still offer security through common ownership. The Common Good Awareness Project was set up to help identify, preserve and restore Scotland's common good and put it back into the control of our communities. The farmhouse project hopes to be an example of how this could be achieved.



19. Diary Progress Notes 2011

January 2011

Inaugural meeting of the Fairfield Farmhouse Community Trust held in the Pearce Institute. Around 80 or so community members attended. 55 people joined the trust and 14 people were elected to the management committee. The trust's draft constitution was reviewed and agreed. The first committee meeting was held at the end of the month.

February

Roger Curtis from Historic Scotland agrees to be co-opted onto the committee to advise on the technical aspects of the renovation. Meeting held with John Gair from GCC to discuss possible scheme of works. GCC agrees to make £10,000 available to repair roof on main building. Trust volunteers to work on roof repairs for East and West pavilions. Two further committee meetings held.

March

Trust writes to GCC CEO to ask for permission to proceed with renovation and re-instatement of building. Trust receives favourable response naming Diane Walker as the new point of contact. Further committee meeting held.

April

City Building gain access to main building to start roof repair on main building. No work was completed however as asbestos was discovered. GCC reported that they would arrange for safe disposal however cost would be offset against £10,000 set aside for roof repair. Further committee meeting held.

May

Trust reps hold meeting with Diane walker to discuss Trust's renovation proposals and ideas for managing the building when complete. Meeting goes well and Diane agrees to draft more formal legal agreement for the parties to consider.

June

Local businessman donates money and the Trust invests in building materials, tools and safety equipment. Volunteers begin work on East Pavilion. Renovation sub-committee satisfied that as asbestos is confined to main building it is safe to proceed with temporary roof repair on pavilions. Further committee meeting held.

July

Bad weather starts to hamper volunteer's efforts. Renovation team insist that roof should only be accessed when it is completely dry. Volunteer safety considered paramount above all else.

August

Bad weather continues to limit access to roof. Volunteers turn their attention instead to inside the pavilions. Tonnes of rubble and debris are hand barrowed from inside building. Trust reps meet Diane Walker to review draft agreement between GCC and Trust. GCC contractor Reigart successfully removes and disposes of asbestos.



September

Decision is made to suspend work on East Pavilion due to overall condition of roof towards wall of main building. Scaffold is erected internally to act as prop and prevent risk of collapse. Work begins on West pavilion roof. Guest speakers invited to address committee to provide advice and assistance.

October

Bad weather again limits safe access to roof. North and West pitches boarded and felted. Garden area at the front building cleared.

November

Temporary repair on West Pavilion roof completed. Temporary polycarbonate windows fitted to allow LEG-UP volunteers to shelter and prepare food during winter. Committee meet again to try and finalise proposals for the Trust's legal identity.

December

Decision is made to suspend further roof work until Spring to ensure safety of volunteers. Storms hit at the end of the month. Damage caused to felted area on south pitch (front facing) of East Pavilion leaving board exposed.

Support

Sincere thanks went to the following people without whom the achievements of 2011 would not have been possible. Roger Curtis of Historic Scotland. Roger regularly visited the site to provide advice and support. He also arranged for three donations of building materials. Diane Walker of GCC. Diane has been supportive of the Trust's aims and has helped develop our relationship with GCC. Scott Crambe at Cruden construction. We arranged for a large donation of construction timber leftover from a local housing development he was managing. John Roddie of JC Decaux. John arranged for several pallets of recycled polycarbonate sheeting to be donated.

20. People ideas

Part of the process of creating a vision for the farmhouse is building a network of partners and interested parties. We do not want to repeat what is happening in the community but to support and cooperate with other people and groups to expand possibilities and create avenues of collaboration and mutual support. But ultimately to support local initiatives such as

Stonemason Woodwork Slating

The rebuilding of the farmhouse would operate as a training project on building skills. We have been in conversation with training projects on stone masonry, who would be interested in working on the building as part of their apprentice training. We have a local roofer who has been helping and advising on the roof of the farmhouse and is also interested in the idea of the project as a way of engaging local kids and young people in taking on some of the responsibility of the work needing done.

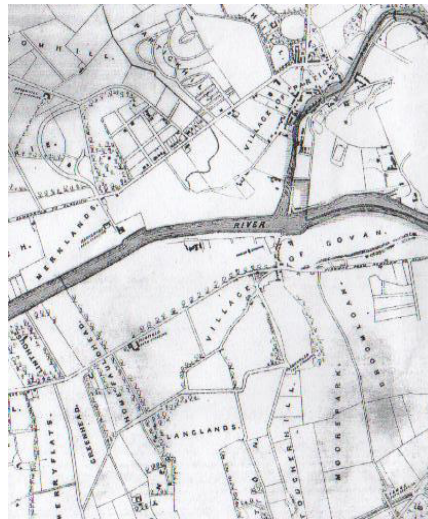
21. Farmhouse History

Fairfield Farm History Brian McQuade

The land at Fairfield Farmhouse (as part of Govan) originally belonged to the Kingdom of the Britons of Strathclyde. By 1034, Govan and the Strathclyde area had been united (under Duncan 1) to the Scottish/Pictish kingdom of Alba to form what we today call Scotland. In 1136, Govan became a Prebend (associated church) of Glasgow Cathedral and king David 1 granted the area to the cathedral's Archbishops who rented the land out to various tenants.

The first named occupiers of the Fairfield area were the Rowan family who leased it in 1520. During the early 1600s King James VI of Scotland sold the land to the same family who retained control of it until 1720 when the Oswald's bought it from John Rowen. The Oswald's then adjoined it to their holding of Shieldhall.

Simpson mentions that a Mr. Alex. Thomson rented Fairfield farmhouse and its steading in the early 1800s. Both Fairfield and Shieldhall were sold as one lot in 1837 to a Mr. Johnson, who was the MP for Kilmarnock.



Govan parish Map 1852

The earliest map on which the farmhouse appears (as part of a complex of buildings) is the Govan Parish Map of 1852 where it is entitled Fairfield Farm Steading.

The northern, riverside section of the Fairfield Estate was bought in 1864 by Randolph, Elder & Co., while the southern Elderpark side, which still contains the farm, was bought by Elder's widow in 1883 as a gift to the people of Govan. It remains so to this day.

See Simpson, A History of Govan, 1987, pp.8; 10; 11; 12; 15; 21; 33; 35, 64

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